



Al-Risala 1989

May

It is Natural to Revere God

The human urge to self-prostration in order to express reverence and a sense of gratitude is very deeply embedded in the human psyche, as psychologists and other students of human nature will confirm. This feeling is, in fact, a desire to worship God, only, in modern times, this has been diverted through ignorance, or apostasy to wrongful ends.

Below are two pictures showing the posture of self-prostration. The individuals concerned are both Americans, one a top athlete, Carl Lewis and the other a tennis champion, John McEnroe. Both fell upon the ground to give physical expression to strong inner feelings – though opposite in kind. But the thoughts that passed through their minds bore no relation to the *Shariah*. Although they experienced what, in religious terminology is known as *bandagi* (servitude), it was to things other than God that they made obeisance.



DOWN AND OUT ... Farmer champion, John McEnroe is floored in his match against Wally Masur of Australia in the Wimbledon championships on Thursday. Wally Masur won 7-5, 7-6(7-5), 6-3. – PTI photo.



Carl Lewis kisses the track after winning the 200 meters at the recent U.S. Track and Field trials. With victory Lewis assured himself of a crack at Jesse Owens' record of four gold medals at the Berlin Olympics in 1936. Lewis had earlier qualified for the 100 meters, the long jump and the 4×100 meters relay, AP.

In the case of Carl Lewis, who had won the 200 meters race at the track and field trials at Los Angeles on June 22, 1984, the track upon which he had run to victory inspired such strong feelings of reverence in him, that he put his forehead on the track, then fell prostrate. Rather different were the feelings of John McEnroe, who had just been defeated by Wally Mansur of Australia on June 24, 1988, in the Wimbledon championship. Greatly upset by his defeat, he cast himself full length upon the ground. This was actually a sign of humility, for he later accepted the full responsibility for his defeat. "I could not even do the basics. It almost made me sick."

Man's need to express gratitude or humility by the act of self-prostration is spontaneous and natural urge. But, because of his ignorance, he prostrates himself, not before God, as he ought to, but before other, worldly, material things.

Had McEnroe and Lewis thought of their Creator and Sustainer as they threw themselves on the ground, instead of, in the first instance, how shocking it was to be defeated and, in the second instance, of how great a role the track had played in the winner's life, they would have fulfilled the greatest need of all – the need to bow to the Almighty.

The human urge to self-prostration in order to express reverence and a sense of gratitude is very deeply embedded in the human psyche, as psychologists and other students of human nature will confirm. This feeling is, in fact, a desire to worship God, only, in modern times, this has been diverted through ignorance, or apostasy to wrongful ends. What man ought to give to God in terms of faith and devotion,

he gives instead to others: this is known as *shirk* (idolatry). When man focuses his natural feelings upon his Maker, that is to say, his religious life is conducted along the lines of monotheism, his entire nature is directed towards the correct objective. If man indulges in *shirk*, it means that his true nature has become warped, and he has lost his proper sense of purpose in life.

Man, by the very force of nature is compelled to make someone, or some thing, his 'god.' Since the real God is not visible to the human eye, man turns to visible objects and regards them as 'god.' So what he should give, by rights to God, he gives to things and people.

Towards the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th, a belief came into existence that there was no such thing as human nature, and that man was shaped exclusively by external circumstances. But modern research has proved this theory wrong. "Nature beats nurture" was the keynote of an extensive, 8-year research programme concluded recently in America by a team of psychologists at the University of Minnesota. Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud were thus shown to be wrong in their inference that nurture was the key factor in man's psychological development. In their study of 350 pairs of twins, 44 of whom were identical, scientists found that the influence of genes was clearly victorious in the 'nature versus nurture' dispute. The results of their research will be seen as refuting Marxist dogma that insists that man can be 'remade'. 'In particular, we found that the tendency to believe in traditional values and the strict enforcement of rules is more an inherited trait,' said one of the researchers. Dr. David Lykken (*Hindustan Times*, January 4, 1987).

If we put together the results of this piece of research and the evidence that we see in daily life, we have to come to the conclusion that the feeling of servitude to a Superior Being is a wholly natural and real feeling. Had it been otherwise, it would have ceased to be spontaneously experienced throughout the centuries right up to the present day. What tends to stifle this natural urge nowadays is the atmosphere of secularism and atheism in which the modern generation has been brought up. Nevertheless, religiosity has survived. No force on this earth has been able to put an end to it. Its survival was strikingly expressed at the Olympic Games held in Seoul (Korea) in September 1988, when the winner of the gold-medal in the 200 meter race on September 29, fell down at the end of the race, automatically adopting the posture of *namaz*, i.e. sitting cross-legged with her hands raised in prayer. She looked as if she had actually just finished *namaz* and was engaged in *dua*, which is done after saying *namaz*. But she was no *namazi* (praying woman). She was 27-years old sports champion, Florence Griffith Joyner, held to be the fastest woman runner in the world. Her success had so stirred up her inner being, that, still clad in sports clothes, she began expressing her feelings to God in the traditional posture of *namaz*.

This remarkable happening shows how deeply the concept of the Benefactor, the Giver, and the homage due to Him, are engraved upon the human soul. When man is blessed by some extraordinary success, his own inner being prompts him to bow down before this Supreme Being, and humbly acknowledge Him as the greatest Benefactor of all.

5 May 1989

Prayer places one under divine protection

Part of a long tradition reported by Muadh ibn Jabal goes like this: “Do not omit to offer an obligatory (*farz*) prayer, for one who makes this omission renders himself unfit for God’s protection.”

(Al-Tabarani)

Even When You Are the Loser

Canadian runner Ben Johnson, the world 100-metres champion, won the gold medal in an international flat racing competition at Seoul. But the following day, he was not only stripped of the gold medal, but was also banned from competition for two years being found to have used steroids at the Seoul Olympics. For Ben Johnson this was the most severe shock of his life. He, however, did not waste his time in protesting against the "cruel judges". Adopting the way of the brave, he made plans to start his preparations all over again.

The Jamaican-born sprinter was interviewed in his Toronto home in November 1988 an account of which has been published in the press. According to the newspaper reports of 29 November, 1988, the world 100-metre champion, Ben Johnson, weeping in front of television cameras, said he never knowingly took banned drugs, and dreams of making a comeback at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, Spain.

He said that his impressive muscular growth and his world records resulted from "13 years of dedication to track, from several hours a day of weight-lifting and exercise." He looked deeply moved during the conversation. He burst into tears when talking of the difficult moment he faced after Seoul. The interviewer, Gianni Minoli, said the shooting was suspended for about five minutes because Johnson was unable to control his sobs. Ben Johnson said that he wants to make a comeback to the track and for this he has been training four hours a day, six days a week recently.

"My job is to run. I cannot think of sitting behind a desk. They have taken away my gold medal, not my speed. My only wish is to run again and I will do it." Johnson vowed. What is taken away from you is only an isolated thing, and not your whole existence. You still possess your existence with all its potential intact. Make good of whatever is left to you and then, whenever you have to suffer any deprivation, you will be able to create a new chapter in the history of your career.

7 May 1989

Light in the Darkness

For the Muslims of old the Quran had proved to be a conquering force. For the Muslims of today the Quran has ceased to be so, for the simple reason that the Muslims of today have failed to put it to its proper use.

In the 9th chapter of his well-known book, *The Spirit of Islam*, Syed Amir Ali (1849-1928) quotes Deutsch, a Gennan orientalist on the subject of the Quran: “.. a book by the aid of which the Arabs conquered a world greater than that of Alexander the Great, greater than that of Rome, and in as many tens of years as the latter had wanted hundreds to accomplish her conquests; by the aid of which they alone of all the Shemites came to Europe as kings, whither the Phoenicians had come as tradesmen, and the Jews as fugitives or captives; came to Europe to hold up, together with these fugitives, the light of humanity; – they alone, while darkness lay around, to raise up the wisdom and knowledge of Hellas from the dead, to teach philosophy, medicine, astronomy and the golden art of song to the West as to the East, to stand at the cradle of modern science, and to cause us late epigoni for ever to weep over the day when Granada fell (p. 394).”

For the Muslims of old the Quran had proved to be a conquering force. For the Muslims of today the Quran has ceased to be so, for the simple reason that the Muslims of today have failed to put it to its proper use.

7 May 1989

Letting one's heart be moved by the Quran.

Abu Hamzah once told Abdullah ibn Abbas that he was quick at recitation. "I have sometimes completed the whole Quran once or twice in a single night." "I prefer to read just one chapter," said Ibn Abbas. "When you recite, you should do so in such a way that your ear hears and your heart assimilates what you are reciting. You should pause at its places of wonderment to let your heart be moved by it. Your aim should not be just to reach the final chapter.

8 May 1989

The Real Threat to India's Unity

It is now a matter of history that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru regarded the perennial threat of Hindu dominance as a major danger to the unity of India, a unity which could survive only through a commitment to secularism.

A biography * of former Prime Minister, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, edited by M.J. Akbar provides an exhaustive study on the subject. In its 27th chapter it is written that Nehru regarded the perennial threat of Hindu dominance as a major danger to the unity of India, a unity which could survive only through a commitment to secularism. He had kept the communal elements in the Congress under strong check. As his own influence increased, theirs declined, and in the 1950's the communalists of the 1940s were slowly weeded out or put into limbo. In the 1960s Nehru began to worry about what might happen after his death. A little before the Bhubaneswar session of the Congress, remembers Gundevia, Nehru had joined one of the Friday morning meetings at the foreign office where all the senior & junior bureaucrats gathered. The topic shifted to the professed neutrality of the Indian Civil services. Gundevia asked Nehru, 'Well Sir, this being the case, what happens if tomorrow, shall we say, the communists came into power? We have had a Communist Government in Kerala. But what happens to the services if the Communists are elected to power, tomorrow, at the Centre, here in Delhi?

Nehru pondered before answering, 'Communists, Communists, Communists! Why are all of you so obsessed with Communists and Communism? What is it that Communists can do that we cannot do and have not done for the country? Why do you imagine the Communists will ever be voted into power at the Centre?' A pause, and then the words came slowly and deliberately. 'The danger to India, mark you, is not communism. It is Hindu right-wing Communalism.' Before the meeting closed he repeated these two sentences.

The danger predicted by Nehru has now become an ever-present and overwhelming reality.

*M.J. Akbar, *Nehru: The Making of India*, 1988, p. 580.

9-10 May 1989

The Verdict of the Quran

In ancient Medina (Yathrib), where the population consisted of both Jews and non-Jews, the moral condition of the Jews was such that when Jews fought Jews, or when an individual Jew was unjust or cruel to another of his own faith, their leaders remained impassive, unmindful of God's specific commandment that when a man takes another's life or property, or sullies his honour, it is our duty to do our utmost to stop such injustice: we should not, in fact, rest content until such evils are removed from society. But if a similar incident took place between a Jew and a non-Jew, for instance if an idolater encroached upon the life or property of a Jew, then it would be as if a hornet's nest had been disturbed. Jewish scholars would wrathfully emerge from their seclusion and Jewish leaders would make fiery speeches against that particular piece of injustice. Then they would definitely recall every commandment of the divine *Shariah* which dealt with respect for the life, property and honour of others.

Although in this way, they figured as champions of the divine *Shariah*, they did not receive any credit for this ostensibly religious act. The Quran specifically asks how it came about that in cases of injustice and oppression in which only Jews were involved they did not remember the commandments of their scriptures, but that whenever there was any confrontation between Jews and non-Jews, they launched public campaigns in the cause of justice, that being one of the imperatives of their scriptures. The Quran, in fact, denounced people who adhered to such double standards and made it plain that they would be put to shame in this world and could expect nothing in the Hereafter but the severest of punishment (2:85).

This verse of the Quran applies as much to our present-day Muslim religious scholars and leaders as it did to the Jews of antiquity. Today, it is common to find Muslims treating other Muslims with great cruelty and injustice without there being any reaction on the part of religious authorities. They simply close their eyes to such evils, neither aiding the Oppressed nor condemning the oppressor. They do not appear to see it as their duty to rid society altogether of oppression. Yet, if the oppressor happens to be a non-Muslim, all the religious leaders and scholars rise in a body against him. They would do well to reflect upon the fact that such acts, in the eyes of God, merit no reward as being 'religious' in motivation, but are deserving rather of punishment.

10-11 May 1989

A Basic Necessity in Social Construction

Going from January to December means traversing a full period of twelve months. The earth will revolve on its axis no fewer than 365 times before we reach the end of the year. This is a very simple reality, but how often do we lose sight of it in trying to leap ahead to some distant objective.

The Muslims of the present day need to dwell on this point when they set themselves some important task like launching an Islamic movement. They must remember that one who is at the outset of his journey cannot reach his destination unless he covers the intervening miles. When they launch a movement and, in no time, are confronted by failure, they need to ask themselves if, step by step, and in due course, they have met the actual demands of their campaign. They need to see themselves as being at the beginning of their history, not nearing its end.

Orderly progression is a basic necessity of social evolution. But, in building a community, Muslim leaders totally forget what should be a universal law. They want to leap straight from January to December without considering what has to come in between. Without laying any actual foundation, they want to be seen by the world on the top of their imaginary building. The tone as well as the content of their speeches would suggest that, without covering the distance between the starting point and the end, they have actually reached their ultimate destination.

We should never lose sight of the fact that our first task is to build up a purposeful nation. In order to have the cooperation of the people, we have to give them such guidance as will enable them to understand their past and their present, so that they may put them in their proper perspective. We have to awaken in them the consciousness that, in spite of many differences, it is both desirable and possible to unite. We have, moreover, to give them every positive encouragement to rise above personal interests and fleeting passions in the interests of attaining greater objectives. To this end, self-sacrifice must be held up as the greatest possible virtue.

Given the eventuality of a widespread moral reawakening it should be quite possible to launch ourselves on a new and greatly superior chapter of world history, but any attempt to forge straight ahead without having done all of the necessary groundwork would only be unrealistic and ultimately counterproductive. Far from leading humanity into greener pastures, it would be more like taking a leap into outer darkness.

On hearing the Hereafter mentioned, he waived his claim

Umm Salamah tells of how two of the Helpers brought a dispute before the Prophet about a long-standing issue of inheritance for which neither party could produce a witness. "You bring me your disputes," the Prophet said to them, "and, when no proper evidence is brought forward, I judge them according to my own way of thinking. I might, on the basis of partial evidence, make a settlement in favour of one of the parties, but in so doing, it may be that I take away from the other what is his rightful due. In that case, the one in whose favour I pass judgement should not accept what has been apportioned to him, for that would be like his accepting a firebrand which, on the Day of Resurrection, would stick on his neck." At these words, both the Helpers broke down and wept. "Prophet of God!" they both cried out, "he can have my rightful share!" "The Prophet then told them that in view of their changed attitude they should go and, seeking to do what was just and right, should divide the inheritance into two parts. Then they should draw lots as to who should have which part. In this way, each would have the other's approval of the share be received.

(Kanz al-Ummal)

The State of Present Society

The Indian Express of November 24, 1988, lies before me. The first page carries a news item that a 26-year old woman, called Parvesh, was murdered by her mother-in-law, who poured kerosene over her and set her on fire because she had not met her in-laws' demand for 10,000 rupees from her parents.

The following day, a similar news item appeared on the first page of the same newspaper: 'Another Dowry Victim.' It seems that 26-year old Arween Rana was killed by her in-laws, again, only because she failed to meet their monetary demands. News of this nature – 'dowry' deaths, as these murders are routinely called by the police – can be found in the newspapers every day. The, issue of the increasing rate of dowry deaths having been raised in the Rajya Sabha, the Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr. P. Chidambaram, gave the following figures:

In	1985	999	deaths
	1986	1319	"
	1987	1786	"

This is only one aspect of the level of barbarity that present-day Indian society has reached. Such events go to show that the society in which we are living is that of ferocious wolves rather than that of civilized human beings. This being so, protesting against rioters, or issuing statements to condemn the rioters can only be regarded as a foolish reaction. In such a state affairs the only way for a wise man to escape is to avoid these beasts in human form. Even when there is provocation from their side, one should not allow oneself to be provoked. No one fights a beast: beasts are to be avoided: one is not supposed to do battle with them.

The Inputs of Nation-Building

“Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience.”

When discussing the slowness of human progress, philosopher once made the point that “it is not that people are deficient in strength but in intention.” It would certainly be true to say that people possess ability, but lack the drive to make the most of it. Any venture – if it is to be successful – requires strenuous and unremitting effort over a long period of time. The virtues of patience and endurance are vital, therefore, for anyone who wishes ultimately to see the fruits of his labours. If one is lacking in these qualities, one should give up the hope of any great success. The secret of achievement in life can be summed up thus: the longer the wait, the greater the progress. As Benjamin Franklin put it, “He who can have patience can have what he will.”

The building up of a community life may be achieved in a larger or shorter period of time, depending upon the kind of nation building you want to do. Do you want to work the community up to fever pitch, in the mistaken belief that the rapid instigation of temporary, therefore, negative zeal should be the main objective? And do you imagine that you are really achieving something by shouting provocative slogans to assemble large crowds at showily arranged functions. If, according to you, this is the way to construct a community, you could, given conditions which are favourable to your project, lead the nation, to disaster. In effect, you would be building not the nation but the image of your personal leadership. This is not devotion to the community, but mere glorification of the self.

This kind of work can be advantageous to the self-proclaimed leaders of a community, but not to humanity at large. It is the result not of dedication to the highest ideals, but of an egocentric drive towards instant leadership. It is a way of placing oneself in the limelight at very little cost of oneself. While some resort to such tactics for personal gratification, others do so out of sheer ignorance.

Where there is a desire for community development, we should take a lesson from nature. As Emerson puts it, “Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience.” We must, therefore look for our inspiration to the permanence of the banyan tree, and not to the transience of the fragile creeper. Work of this nature requires time. It cannot be achieved in haste. It is only ignorance, or the craving for self-aggrandizement which causes leaders to think otherwise. Any community which aspires to the fulfillment of its dream of progress and prosperity without patience and assiduity should realize that such a dream can never become a reality.

Making due preparation before taking action

When Abu Bakr decided to wage war against the Byzantines, he conferred with certain of the Prophet's companions, several of whom gave him their opinions. "O successor of the Prophet," said Khalid ibn Said, "It is not for us to disobey you, or to differ among ourselves. When you tell us to go out, we shall go; when you give an order, we shall obey it." Pleased by this response, Abu Bakr told Bilal to announce that they would go ahead with the war against the Byzantines. People then began to gather in preparation for the campaign. One day, Abu Bakr came along with a number of other companions to where the troops were camping, and noted that the number who had assembled to fight in the Byzantine was quite considerable. But they did not think that even this number would be really effective against the Byzantines and, when Abu Bakr once again sought advice, Umar declared that he did not think the number sufficient. Accordingly, the departure of the army was delayed, while a letter was written to Yemen for reinforcements.

Inspection From Above

There is no detail of our private or public lives which escapes His eyes, and no matter how hard human beings try to conceal their sins of omission and commission, God's all-seeing eye will immediately take them in at a glance.

On May 12, 1988, a major explosion 800 kilometers to the south west of Moscow was picked up by US spy satellites. What it destroyed was the greater part of the Pavlograd nuclear missile plant – the only one of its kind in the USSR. The location of this plant, which produced rocket motors for intercontinental missiles, had been a highly guarded secret, and the news of explosion was naturally suppressed by the Soviet authorities.

However, where the Russian media were silent on the subject, the authorities having managed to shroud the whole affair in secrecy, the U.S.A. was quick to give the news to the whole world. At a later stage, Russian sources also confirmed the explosion. No matter how assiduously the Soviet authorities had tried to guard the secrets of the existence, location and produce of this unique weapons factory, they ultimately became known to the world at large, because space spying, particularly by the U.S.A., is now going on a massive scale.

If, previously we have not been able to conceive of the minute, global observation which is carried on at all times by the Almighty, we now have a man-made inspection system which can give us – on a smaller scale – what our Maker is capable of doing on a much grander scale throughout the vastness of the universe. There is no detail of our private or public lives which escapes His eyes, and no matter how hard human beings try to conceal their sins of omission and commission, God's all-seeing eye will immediately take them in at a glance.

In this world, man does not acknowledge the evil of his ways – particularly his arrogance – but, in the Hereafter, God will place a complete record before man, which he will have no choice but to acknowledge. If people were to realize the extent and penetration of this 'heavenly inspection' their whole lives would undergo the most profound of changes.

The Reality Laid Bare

The movement to recover the Babri Masjid, which was to climax the 'Ayodhya March' certainly began with a bang, but ended, pathetically enough, in a whimper. Leaders who had posed as saviours of the community ended up like so many burst balloons. It is fortunate that that is the only sense in which tragedy struck, for the Muslim 'millions' who were supposed to swell the ranks of the marchers had had the common sense to drop out even before the day of the march. In this way, they escaped the evil consequences of their 'leaders' wish to send them like so many animals to the slaughter, purely for the sake of their own honour and glory.

The controversy over the Babri Masjid is nothing new. It dates right back to pre-partition days. It was as recently as 1987, however, that the struggle for its recovery, which had hitherto been peaceful, now assumed an agitational character. Self-styled Muslim leaders first gave the call to battle by announcing a boycott on the Republic Day celebrations on January 26, 1987. As a first initiative in non-peaceful methods, it was an absurd step, and after generating much heat in the news media, it was finally withdrawn.

Later, however, on March 30, 1987, Muslim leaders organized a rally of "millions" in front of the Boat Club in New Delhi in order to pressurize the government into meeting their demand. On this occasion, provocative speeches were made and inflammatory slogans, such as "We will not rest content until we have taken the Babri Masjid back" were shouted. In a frenzy of fiery speech-making, the leaders announced that the next step would be to set off on a march to Ayodhya, where, after making a victorious entry, they would proceed to the mosque to say their Friday prayers. Later, at the meeting held in December, 1987, two marches were announced, one, a mini-march of the leaders on August 12, 1988, and the other, the long march of the general Muslim body on October, 14, 1988. According to the announcement, both marches were to originate from Faizabad and terminate at the Babri Masjid, Ayodhya. The first march was to be undertaken by about 500 Muslim leaders and representatives, and the second by millions of the Muslim public.

But neither the mini-march nor the long march became a reality. The reason was that as soon as the Ayodhya march was announced by Muslim leaders, the extremist organizations of the opposing party, like the Ram Janam Bhumi Sangharsh Samiti, the Bajrang Dal and the Vishw Hindu Parishad became galvanized into activity. It was as if the challenge posed by the Muslims had given them new life. They openly made statements to the effect that if the Muslims carried out the Ayodhya march, they would be crushed long before they reached their destination. The Muslim leaders then managed, on some pretext, to postpone the march of August 12. The excuse they made was that the central government was taking

some interest in this matter, and that it hoped, by negotiating with both parties, to find a solution which would be acceptable to both.

According to the daily *Qaumi Awaz* (September 27, 1988), a meeting of the Markazi Rabita Committee of the Babri Masjid movement was held in New Delhi on September 26. In view of the prevailing situation, the Rabita committee decided that the march of the million Muslims, scheduled to take place in October 14, 1988, would have to be postponed. This same date, however, was now fixed for the leaders' march, which was supposed to have taken place on August 12, 1988.

The so-called leaders of the Babri Masjid movement then repeatedly exhorted the Muslim public to participate in the Ayodhya march. According to the *Qaumi Awaz* of October 8, 1988, the convenor of the Babri Masjid Rabita Committee announced that "there is no question of postponing or cancelling the march." The report added, moreover, that "the Rabita Committee has sent a written request to the Chief Minister of U.P., Mr. Narain Dutt Tiwari, that security arrangements be made for the Muslim leaders participating in that march (p. 1)".

A statement published in the press by the convenor of the Rabita Committee of the Babri Masjid Movement sought to clarify the Muslim position:

"Through several newspapers, the misunderstanding has been created by certain individuals that the Ayodhya march, in which volunteers from all over the country will participate, has been postponed. The Ayodhya march has not been postponed. The date fixed for it is October 14, 1988. We appeal to all the action committees of all states, districts and cities to continue their preparations for the Ayodhya march. Volunteers' names should continue to be registered in every locality and mosque, groups should be formed in each place, and the funds to meet their travelling expenses should be raised (*Dawat*, October 1, 1988)."

Right up to the 13th of October, the leaders of the Babri Masjid Movement went on proclaiming that Ayodhya march would certainly take place on the 14th of October. There was no question of its being postponed or cancelled. Such public announcements and speeches so exacerbated Hindu sentiments that they began to take steps to foil the march. One measure they took was to organize a bandh in UP on October 8, 1988. On this occasion, provocative speeches were made at different places, with the result that tensions built up and riots broke out in several UP towns, such as Muzaffarnagar, Aligarh, Bahraich, Jhansi, Khatauli, Faizabad, Gopalganj, etc. Lives were lost and property destroyed, and the sufferers were, of course, the Muslims.

The so-called leaders still continued to announce that the Ayodhya march would certainly take place, and in the same breath, continued to demand that the government should guarantee the safety of the marchers. But the government refused to comply with this demand, and asked instead that the march be postponed on the grounds that an acceptable solution could be arrived at through negotiation.

Although Muslim leaders had repeatedly declared that the Ayodhya march would take place on the proposed date that, in fact, it was unstoppable – they had to accept the fact that the government was not ready to take the responsibility for their security. This meant that they would be laying themselves wide open to the onslaughts of the other party. Nor could they close their eyes to the bloody riots in different parts of U.P. which had been sparked off in the wake of the bandh organized by extremist Hindu groups. This, inter alia, made it crystal clear that if the Ayodhya march were carried out, violence would surely follow. At this stage, the hazards having obviously become too great, the Muslim public withdrew its support for the march. They could hardly continue to be enthusiastic about a journey which could easily end in death. With no support and no guarantee of security, the Muslim leaders took the only way out. Just one day before the appointed date, they announced the postponement (actually the cancellation) of the march.

This piece of strategy saved the lives of the Muslim leaders, but what of the hundreds of Muslim families who suffered maiming, death and destruction in the violence which erupted as a result of the October bandh? The problem of the Babri Masjid had not only been solved but, if anything, had deepened in intensity. The Muslim leaders' approach had achieved nothing. It had only added to the number of Muslim graves.

Just a few days before the Ayodhya march was due to take place, I asked someone whom I considered an average Muslim whether he thought it would actually take place. "Maulana Sahib," he replied, "life is dear to everyone." His negativism was merely an acknowledgement that no one would knowingly and willingly court death over such an issue.

In the beginning, the Muslim public had been enough to support the "champions of the movement." They thought that simply by swelling the crowds addressed by their leaders, they could solve the problem of the Babri Masjid. But, finally, they came to the conclusion that their leaders' oratory was nothing but the loud rattle of empty vessels. Moreover, by marching on the Babri Masjid, their only 'achievement' would be to lose their lives and property. The real problem would remain unsolved. A march of this kind would only mean the destruction of the community. It had nothing in the least constructive about it. Although late in the day, the scales finally fell from Muslim eyes, and they at last understood the true nature of the problem.

It very clearly appeared from their attitude that they were not going to participate in the march alongside their leaders. Now the leaders of the movement found themselves alone. The "millions of Muslims," the crowd they had imagined raising slogans along with them, and cheering them wildly as they addressed the throng, – thus adding to their glory, – were nowhere to be seen. Seeing that they were now helpless in their isolation, the leaders prepared an announcement of postponement of the march and had it published in the newspapers just one day before the scheduled date.

Here, I was reminded of a humorous tale whose events are quite on a parallel with the Ayodhya march. I heard it in Medina in 1984, from a Palestinian Muslim, by the name of Mustafa Shawar, who had gone

to Medina for his education. He used to talk very interestingly, and one day, he told me this story of a ruler who had a very troublesome camel. Not being tethered, the beast used to stray into fields and orchards, and seriously damage the crops. The villagers, who were thoroughly sick of this camel, went to the Khatib (leader of prayer in the mosque) and sought his help. The Khatib duly thought of a plan. He asked the villagers to follow him to the residence of the ruler, where he would call out the latter's name. "When the ruler comes out, I will call out, 'O, Hakim (ruler), your camel.' Then you will have to say in chorus, 'Stop it from harassing us!'" Having settled the villagers' role, the Khatib set off with great enthusiasm, walking further and further ahead. In the beginning the people walked right behind him, but the further they went, more they were overcome by their fear of the ruler, and, in ones and twos, they slunk away to their homes. By the time the Khatib had reached the ruler's residence, he was marching all alone. Without looking behind him, he knocked on the great door, and, as agreed, when the Hakim came out, called out "O, Hakim, 'your camel!'" To his dismay, there was no chorus from behind to complete the sentence. Once again, he exclaimed, "O, Hakim, your camel" In the silence that followed, the Hakim, in exasperation, asked him what on earth he wanted to say. Embarrassed at finding himself all alone, the Khatib quickly finished the sentence with ".... wants a she-camel!" Whereupon he made an abrupt departure.

The slogan-shouting of the Ayodhya march met a very similar fate. The would-be leaders had announced that for the recovery of the Babri Masjid, they would march on August 12 and October, 14. In their rabble-rousing speeches, they had asserted that millions of Muslims from all over the country would reach Ayodhya, raising slogans, and that on making a triumphant entry into the Babri Masjid, they would say their Friday prayers. The situation later changed so drastically that it became clear to everyone that 'Ayodhya march' was synonymous with 'bloody march.' Muslims could be heard saying that if they joined in it, they would be marching to their deaths. "Why should one get killed for nothing, and leave behind us widows and orphans?"

Now the leaders of the movement found themselves in the same plight as that of the Khatib. When they turned around, they found no "millions of Muslims" behind them. So, in the same way, they quickly altered their slogan so that it should express an appeal to Muslims to go to the mosques and pray, rather than go on the march to Ayodhya, their explanation being that a Muslim marches not towards man, but towards God. The only comment I have to add is that if the leaders had expressed these sentiments at the outset, their words would have carried some weight. But at that particular juncture, they only underlined their incompetence and lack of foresight.

On February 14, 1986, I made the following entry in my diary: "Today was Friday. 'Babri Masjid Day' was observed today at the instance of the leaders of the Babri Masjid Movement. Many emotional speeches were made in the mosques of Delhi and U.P. Today when I went to say my Friday prayers in a Delhi mosque, the Imam appeared extraordinarily excited. He spoke loudly, almost shouting. "Our throats may be slit, we may be crushed by tanks, or fired on by cannons, but we cannot tolerate our mosque being taken possession of, or desecrated"

After the prayer, processions filed through the streets. When one of these reached Lal Kuan in Delhi, the situation turned violent. The police had to open fire and, as a result, two Muslim youths lost their lives. In other places, too, in U.P., firing had to be resorted to, and, of course, it was Muslims who had to bear the loss of lives and property.

After raising a great hue and cry for the space of one day, the Muslims with no choice but to bear their losses unilaterally, relapsed into silence. And the 'Babri Masjid' was still the "Ram Janam Bhumi Mandir."

When I realized what the actual state of affairs was that day, I exclaimed, "It is better to remain silent before, rather than after displaying cowardice." This utterance was subsequently published on the front page of the Urdu edition of *Al-Risala* (September 1986) with the subheading of 'Destruction in the name of Sacrifice.'

As for recovering the Babri Masjid, the so-called leaders did not succeed by even one per cent. All they have managed to do is increase Muslim problems. One Muslim newspaper wrote that the whole country was enveloped in the 'fire of communalism.' The title given to this particular essay was 'Muslims Horror-Stricken.' It is certainly true that hatred, anger, revenge and tension have combined to produce an atmosphere in which it is all but impossible for innocent, peace-loving people to lead a courageous and honourable life (*Hujoom*, 18-24 November, 1988).

Although these circumstances are deplorable in the extreme, they have had one positive result, and that is that Muslims have started thinking realistically. Now they are able to understand that the responsibility for this situation devolves more upon them than upon anyone else. The creators of this atmosphere are those self-styled leaders who, in the name of sacrifice, have been hastening Muslims along the downward path to destruction.

Another Muslim journal, which had also indulged in emotionalism in politics, made the avowal that "in this, some blame has to be shared by us as well. We were overcome by emotion. We did not have before us the example of the Prophet. We erred in trying to solve the problems emotionally rather than by planning. This struggle is not going to be successful solely on the strength of provocative statements and speeches (*Nida-e-Millat*, October 23, 1988)."

It is a matter of satisfaction that, after witnessing the dire consequences of emotional politics, Muslims now want to distance themselves from the arena. The sacrifice of human lives has at last opened the eyes of the people to the futility of wasting a hundred years on absurd slogans and appeals. Could they but free themselves from the influence of their leaders, they would come much nearer to attaining their objectives, because their refusal to be guided by self-appointed leaders would be the greatest step towards real progress.

Undesirable Consequences

The movement launched in the name of the Babri Masjid has produced results which are quite the reverse of what was originally aimed at. One dangerous consequence has been that the extremist Hindu elements, now being united, have become very powerful, and thus pose a serious threat to Muslims.

I gained an interesting insight into how this unity was achieved from an experience related to me by a Mr. Raj Tiwari, a businessman from Bhopal, whom I met at Bhopal Airport while waiting for my flight to Delhi in November 88. It seems that a few days prior to this, he had to go on business to Bankura, a town in West Bengal. The hotel he stayed in, the Pushpak, had a mandir to one side of it with a board above its entrance bearing the words, 'Zita Shiv Sena Karayalaya, West Bengal.' While he was examining this board, an elderly Bengali came up to him and enquired what he was looking at. Raj Tiwari, who could speak and understand Bengali, told him that he had just been wondering how this 'sena' (army) came to be by the side of the mandir. The Bengali first of all asked him his name and address, then, introducing himself as Pankaj Mukherji, he asked him to come inside. Then he took him to an office like room where some people were working. The walls were adorned with pictures of different Hindu leaders, such as Shivaji, Rana Partap, Sawarkar, Hedgwad, etc. All of these pictures were 2 feet square, but they were dwarfed by one centrally placed life-sized portrait which was double their size. Raj Tiwari's eye was immediately caught by this portrait and, to his surprise, he recognised the features of Syed Shahabuddin. Unable to understand how such a picture came to be within the precincts of a mandir, he asked Mr. Mukherji how it happened that Syed Shahabuddin's picture had been placed in a position of such prominence, adding, "He is your enemy, isn't he?" The Bengali answered, "My son, he is our god. What all our leaders had failed to achieve in a thousand years has been accomplished by Syed Shahabuddin in just a year and a half. Hindus who had slumbered for hundreds of years have been 'awakened by Shahabuddin. We will make a mandir in his name. We will worship him."

Mr. Tiwari dictated this incident to me at 3 p.m. on the 13th of November at Bhopal airport, and then, to vouch for its veracity he put his signature to it. Finally, he offered that if anyone wanted to see this for himself, he was welcome to accompany him to Bankura where he would personally show it to him.

Mr. Raj Tiwari's report is not the only one of its kind. The weekly *Nida-e-Millat* (Lucknow) writes in its editorial of October 23, 1988:

"Once a Hindu visited the residence of a prominent leader of his community where, to his astonishment, he found that a large picture of Syed Shahabuddin had been hung on the wall and garlanded. When he asked how the photograph had come to be there, the Hindu leader replied, 'Shahabuddin is our benefactor. He has united the Hindu community. 'This story is entirely factual and contains no element of exaggeration.'"

Given such clear indications, if Muslims still cannot distinguish between friend and foe, they deserve to go down in history as the most foolish community which ever existed.